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ABSTRACT

It is important to teach listening strategies to second language learners because listening comprehension is a needed and wanted skill, and is also generally neglected. The traditional audiolingual approach does not see listening comprehension as a priority and gives little opportunity to practice listening. Traditional materials are unsatisfactory in that they do not have a natural style of delivery, consist primarily of monologue, are often simply recordings of written language, have inappropriate content, and give too much attention to form. There are in reality many types of listening: for one salient detail, for all salient details, for content for academic purposes, for inference, and for mood and interpersonal relations. There is need for a viable methodology for teaching listening, and two guiding principles exist: (1) to teach students to use all available signals (linguistic, paralinguistic, and extralinguistic), and (2) to encourage, guide, and train students to predict and guess using what has already been said and their existing world knowledge, as they do in their native language. A listening comprehension course in which each unit deals with a different strategy or aspect of listening is recommended, and three stages are suggested: (1) awareness or consciousness-raising, (2) specially constructed "training activities," and (3) less structured activities using unstructured real data. (MSE)

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There ARE Strategies for Listening*

David J. Mendelsohn

INTRODUCTION

We live and work in an English-speaking environment, and this dictates, in my opinion, what we are mandated to do in the ESL classroom.

We must aim our teaching at training our students to communicate. That is, a student coming out of our ESL programme should be better able to cope with English, and should be better able to function in English, than when he¹ came into it. Unfortunately this is not always the case. Sometimes he can "do the present perfect continuous" better, and "get his unreal conditionals correct" more often than before, but he is not necessarily better able to function and communicate in the language. In my terms, being able to communicate involves not only being able to speak and interact successfully, but also being able to listen and comprehend.

I belong to the "anti-osmosis" school of thought. By this I mean that I believe that we have to teach our students *HOW* to listen—I completely reject the "osmosis" argument—the argument that runs: "But they hear English all the time". I believe that we must show them how to do it and what strategies to use. And, we must provide them with lots of time and opportunity to listen in a supportive, non-threatening ESL classroom.

The typical student to whom my heart goes out is the one who is really good at grammar and gets high grades in class tests, but when he goes out into the street, cannot communicate successfully. We often have students who have been given an excellent grounding in English in their home countries but who don't cope in the schoolyard, in the store, or on the street. We must be sure that we do not do the same to our students.

There are two main reasons why I believe that it is very important to encourage the teaching of listening strategies. First of all, I view the ability to understand English when spoken to, i.e., the ability to comprehend the spoken language, as one of the most important skills a student must master in a second language setting. The reason that it is so important is that the second language learner has no control over the language coming at him said by someone else — unlike speaking, in which he can use all kinds of avoidance strategies and circumlocutions, to convey what he wants to say.

Moreover, our students *WANT* a lot of listening practice. Carlos Yorio is currently studying the opinions of students in the Intensive ESL Programme at the University of Toronto, and in a paper entitled "The Language Learner: A

* This paper, presented at the 1983 TEAL Convention in Vancouver, British Columbia in March 1983, was developed from a paper presented to the Colloquium on Second Language Acquisition at the Centre for Second Language Learning, National University of Mexico (UNAM), Mexico City, October 1981.

¹ Throughout this paper, I will use the generic "he" form. This is done, not as a "sexist" act, but for reasons of brevity and clarity.

Consumer with Opinions", he states: "The least expected response...is the one which relates to listening, a skill which we often pay minor attention to and which these students, at least, appear to rate very highly." (p. 12).

The second reason is that listening comprehension is a severely neglected skill. Some members of the "osmosis" school of thought do not teach it because, as I said, they argue that the students hear English anyway. Others who do believe it should be taught, tend not to be too clear as to what to teach and how to teach it.

In this paper I will attempt to show how very important it is that we *teach* our students to listen. I will suggest weaknesses (and reasons for the weaknesses) in the traditional way in which this aspect of second language teaching has been handled in the classroom. I will then describe what I believe to be the guiding principles in the teaching of listening comprehension and will also offer a suggested model for a listening comprehension course, and some successful listening activities for the classroom.

A DEFINITION OF LISTENING COMPREHENSION.

Listening comprehension may be defined as the ability to understand the spoken language of native speakers. It is the ability to hear and know what something *actually* means, what the communicative value or illocutionary force of the utterance really is. This is a significantly different definition from the notion of listening comprehension reflected in the way it has traditionally been taught and tested.

The competent listener has to be able to do three things concurrently:

(i) As a *linguistically competent* listener, he must be able to identify and separate out, from the fast-moving "acoustic blur" coming at him, the different elements of the language system. This entails, for example, discriminating between different segmental phonemes and suprasegmental patterns in the language, e.g., he must be able to *hear* the difference between:

- (a) The men did it/The man did it.
- (b) Tom went to *Japan*/ Tom went to Japan.
- (c) He's eaten his lunch/He's eating his lunch.

(ii) As a *sociolinguistically competent* listener, he must be able to judge the sounds he has identified (through his linguistic competence) as acts of *real communication*. This also involves the comprehension of the total message, e.g.,

- (a) Tom's going to *Japan*(fall)/Tom's going to *Japan*(rise)—must be understood as being quite different in meaning.
- (b) *It's cold in here* — given the right conditions can mean such different things as "I'm stating the fact that it's cold" and "Please shut the window".

(iii) As an *interactionally competent* listener, he must be able to listen, process and, where necessary, respond. A listener should not be judged as competent if he is too busy processing what is being said to respond — he must be able to listen and interact.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING LISTENING COMPREHENSION.

The audiolingual approach emphasized speaking at the expense of listening. However, as I have already said, it is my contention that listening comprehension is particularly important since the learner has no control over what he is going to hear. When listening, he is at the mercy of the speaker. That listening comprehension is of paramount importance is widely accepted by applied linguists and teachers of English as a second language. But the question remains: *How do you teach listening comprehension?* The teacher or materials developer will derive much theoretical support and encouragement from the writings of researchers in second language acquisition, but this work does not tell him *how* listening comprehension should be taught.

In the following discussion I will be giving examples from the teaching of listening comprehension to intermediate-to-advanced level adult learners. Experience has shown that the applicability of the principles to lower level and/or younger learners is very extensive.

THE TRADITIONAL APPROACH TO TEACHING LISTENING COMPREHENSION

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the teaching of listening comprehension in the second language classroom has been singularly unsatisfactory. This stems from a two-fold problem: First, many teachers, particularly those who espoused or, indeed, still espouse the audiolingual method, did not see listening comprehension as a priority, and gave the students very little opportunity to practise.

While listening was, of course, a part of the audiolingual paradigm, the way in which it was handled was unsatisfactory and did not produce competent listeners. Nord (1980:5-6) defines the listening in an audiolingual programme as follows: "...a student 'listens' not so much to comprehend as to mimic (in repetition drill) or to respond in correct form (in pattern response drill)". This type of listening could not really be classified as "listening comprehension" as I defined the term. It was listening for a pattern or for reinforcement of the grammatical pattern being taught.

Furthermore, the amount of listening done was not adequate. Sufficient time always had to be allowed for the all-important oral production, justified by the "pro-osmosis" argument. Also, the type of material and level of material that students listened to was constrained by the structure and vocabulary level that had been reached in oral production. So the audiolingual approach deliberately and conscientiously limited and controlled the language the students heard because it was meant to be reinforcement of what they were practising in the way of grammatical patterns, and the focus was on *the form* when it should have been on *the message*.

The second part of the problem is that although many teachers, particularly in the post-audiolingual era, accept the importance of listening comprehension,

they do not know how to teach it. Most of the time given to listening takes the form of listening to monologue recorded from written text, followed by a *test* in the form of questions on minute details of content.

THE SHORTCOMINGS OF TRADITIONAL LISTENING COMPREHENSION MATERIALS

I have already argued that in traditional ESL courses students did not usually become very proficient listeners. One of the major factors is that the traditional materials are very unsatisfactory from several different points of view.

The style of delivery is not natural

Many traditional materials provide exposure to slow careful speech. While the reason for this is obvious, it poses two major problems: First, it does not prepare the students to cope with the speech of native speakers who do not speak to them in "teacherese" — hence the cry among students that people they come into contact with "speak too fast". A second aspect of this question of style is that it does not provide exposure to real spoken language with all the accompanying "fast-speech" phenomena. There is an extensive inventory of fast-speech rules that should be taught to students. Patterns of simplification ("*watcha gannadu*" — for *What are you going to do?*), vowel reduction and centralization, distortion of word and syllable boundaries, assimilation and blending, are all regular features of real spoken language, but not of most ESL listening materials! And at the syntactic level, the patterns used are unnaturally complete and grammatical, and such natural phenomena as false-starts and over-talk are studiously avoided.

Another problem is that the listening tapes are naturally recorded. They have usually been stripped of background noise and virtually everything is put into words, leaving nothing to paralinguistic signals or sounds. It is my belief that in the real world, paralinguistic and extralinguistic features are an integral part of communication, and should therefore not be neglected in ESL listening materials.

It is not natural communication — it is mainly monologue

Traditionally, ESL listening materials are extended monologue—something we listen to very little in the real world. What is more, this kind of language is a great strain to comprehend because it is usually top-heavy with cognitive content. The vast majority of real communication is dialogue and is more often than not far less heavy in content than the ESL tapes. In addition, monologue does not contain the gambits and other interactional features typical of dialogue. It is my opinion that the listening course is the ideal place for the students to be exposed to these features of spoken language, and yet so many ESL tapes have none or very little of them. I am of the opinion that one of the main reasons for this type of

"unnatural" material is the convenience of preparing it and the difficulty of obtaining materials that are more suitable and more real.

The material is often a recording of written language

There are significant differences between the spoken and the written language, and these are, of course, lost in traditional materials that are usually a reading onto tape of a *written* text. First, the spoken language has much more redundancy built into it than the written language. In spoken English, paraphrase, restatement, and re-definition are very common, assisting the listener to comprehend although he does not have a record of what has gone before. This increased redundancy reduces the semantic load considerably. The semantic load is also reduced by the presence of non-meaningful "fillers", such as, *Well, you see, what I'm trying to say is...*, etc. In their lessons, then, our students, ironically, may be given a less natural and *more difficult* task than the average listening task.

Secondly, the spoken language is not usually presented in as careful, ordered, and logical a way as written language. But ESL listening materials are usually a study in organization and grammaticality! These main differences between spoken and written language should be recognized and mastered by the student of English. By having him listen to written language that is being spoken, we are not only depriving him of an opportunity to master this important difference, but we are tacitly teaching the student that the spoken language differs from the written language only in its symbolic representation.

The content is often inappropriate

Apart from my earlier criticism of the language, and the way it is recorded, often the content of traditional materials is positively bizarre. Patronising, obscure, irrelevant topics are often used. Little note is taken of the urgent needs of the learner, and the materials for adults are often childish and hence demeaning. This would not seem to be the most suitable material to use, and the claim that "Anybody can learn from any material" is an indefensible position.

There is over-attention to form

Another very unsatisfactory dimension of many traditional materials is that the aim of the listening material is often not for the student to understand the *message*, but to demonstrate, on tape, a particular grammatical structure in context. This demonstration of structure is usually followed not by questions of comprehension but by questions aimed at getting students to produce a particular grammatical pattern. I would classify this as grammar practice, as *usage* (Widdowson's term), and not as listening comprehension at all.

This over-attention to form has resulted in under-attention to the communicative values that different forms can have. Very often, at least implicitly, students are taught a particular form, for example the imperative, and are told that it has one particular function, in this case, commanding. Students are not taught that

this is not a hard-and-fast rule of the grammar, and that the communicative value of the utterance varies according to the sociolinguistic conditions prevailing, such as the setting, interpersonal relations, etc. What is more, they are often not made aware of the fact that a particular form can have a number of different communicative functions, and that a particular communicative function can be realized by a number of different linguistic forms.

In the same way, students are often not trained in their listening to make use of *intonation* when interpreting the communicative value of an utterance. Benson, Greaves and Mendelsohn (in press) have empirically shown the power of intonation when determining the communicative value of an utterance.

TYPES OF LISTENING

Traditional ESL listening courses usually failed to grasp the nature of listening. When listening comprehension was taught, it was always taught with the cognitive content of the discourse in mind. Students were asked questions on detail of content, regardless of the fact that, in reality, only a very small proportion of our everyday listening is in fact "listening for content". Listening for content is part of the totality of listening proficiency, but, in the real world, becomes the main focus of listening only under certain very specific conditions which are described below.

In the real world, people listen in a number of different ways for a number of different purposes, in addition to "listening for content". The different types of listening are not usually practised independently of each other, but under different conditions, and for different purposes, one of the types of listening becomes dominant.

Listening for one salient detail

The first situation in which people listen for content in the real world is when they have to extract one salient detail from a longer piece of listening. An example of this would be listening to a recorded telephone message of flight arrival times in order to learn exactly what time a particular flight is due to arrive.

Listening for all salient details

The second type of listening for content occurs when the listener needs to note the details, for example, for purposes of comparison, e.g. at a store finding out what they have in the way of makes, prices and specifications, in order to decide which product to buy. Often the listener needs to take notes.

Listening for content for academic purposes

This is the type of listening a student does in a lecture or in a lesson. However, it should be noted that students need to take written notes if the lecture or lesson is lengthy.

Listening for inference

This is another major type of listening. I define "inferring" as understanding the unsaid. In language, it is as vital to understand what is not said as it is to understand what is said. In monologue this involves understanding the logical relations holding the discourse together, whether overt manifestations of the language system are present to signal the relationship or not. In dialogue in particular, this involves an ability to "read between the lines" and to comprehend implied meanings that are not explicitly stated, but are nevertheless an integral part of the meaning. For example, we may hear a piece of discourse like:

The campers were taken to hospital.

The can of meat was taken away to be tested.

Full comprehension of the meaning requires that the inferred relationship between the meat and the illness be grasped. Very often ESL students understand each of the sentences, but fail to grasp the logical relationship between them. Understanding sarcasm is also a part of this type of inferring, e.g., understanding the true meaning of *I'd love to go with you*, said sarcastically. Understanding sarcasm requires taking note of the context, watching gesture, and noting tone of voice and other paralinguistic features.

Listening for mood and interpersonal relations

While detecting the speaker's mood is seldom the *only* aim of listening, it can, at times, be the main focus. There are a large number of signals that the listener draws on to determine mood or emotions, and these will be discussed below.

THE NEED FOR A VIABLE METHODOLOGY

As I have said, traditional listening courses usually take the form of a piece of extended monologue followed by a series of content questions. The underlying assumption is that one becomes a competent listener by doing a lot of listening. This concept of a lot of exposure cannot be faulted and, indeed, I would advocate a lot of exposure in any listening comprehension course. The weakness is that these traditional listening comprehension lessons are not true *teaching* situations, and, in fact, are *testing* situations. Students listen and answer questions, but there is no method for teaching them how to do this.

TEACHING LISTENING COMPREHENSION — GUIDING PRINCIPLES

It is my belief that we should be teaching the students *strategies of listening*, and giving them practise in using these strategies. There are two guiding principles:

- (1) Teach the students to make use of all the *SIGNALS* available that will help them to comprehend.
- (2) Encourage, guide, and train the students to *PREDICT AND GUESS*. After all, this is something that they do quite naturally in their mother-tongue.

These two guiding principles, which provide the direction and plan that I am advocating, are derived from the work of Gillian Brown (1977, 1978), who defines the aim of teaching listening comprehension as follows:

The main aim in teaching comprehension must be to help the students recognize and use the reliable signals in the spoken form of the foreign language, and help him to predict when only the tip of an iceberg is apparent, what the shape of the rest of the iceberg must be. (1977:168).

RECOGNIZING AND MAKING USE OF THE SIGNALS

When listening in the real world, not in the second language classroom, there are a large number of linguistic, paralinguistic, and extralinguistic signals that the listener makes use of either to confirm a hypothesis he has made, or to complete his comprehension of the utterance. It is the duty of the teacher of listening comprehension to train the students to draw much more heavily on these signals than they usually do when listening. While students do this in their mother-tongue, they seem to rely almost exclusively on the *words* in the second language.

Linguistic signals

These are signals from within the language system that the students should look out for, and make maximum use of in their listening. Those listed below do not constitute a finite list, but are those which my students have found to be helpful.

(i) The first and most obvious linguistic signal is recognizable *lexis* (vocabulary). Once a student is able to recognize a number of lexical items, he will have a pretty good idea of what it is he is listening to. For example, if he recognizes *shovel*, *grass*, *mower* and *lawn*, he will know with a fair degree of certainty that the topic is gardening.

(ii) The second type of linguistic signal is the *syntactic pattern*. There is often a possibility of knowing what the pattern is, even if a part of the utterance is incomprehensible. For example, in the sentence *My uncle always does his work teffily* we can assume that "teffily" is an adverb, thereby limiting the meanings it could have. Or, in the example, *Dr. Lightfoot, who guffled my aunt's flups, is a fine surgeon*, if we can identify *who guffled my aunt's flups* as a non-restrictive relative clause, we can assume that this is extra, non-vital information, and that the main point is that *Dr. Lightfoot is a fine surgeon*.

(iii) *The place of the stressed syllables* in an utterance is another very useful linguistic signal. More often than not the stressed words are the content words, and the unstressed words are the grammatical or non-content words. Therefore, the main idea of an utterance is usually derivable from the stressed, content words alone. In fact, this is the principle of *telegraphic language*. It is therefore advisable that students be taught to identify the place of the stressed syllables. They should be trained that stressed syllables are usually louder than unstressed syllables, that unstressed syllables often contain reduced or centralized vowels, that stressed syllables are often accompanied by hand or head movements, and that strings of

unstressed syllables are usually speeded up to make the time between stressed syllables the same.

(iv) A fourth very helpful linguistic signal is the "tonic" or "primary" stress in the utterance, i.e., the syllable with the greatest pitch movement. In unmarked situations, this occurs on the last lexical item of the tone group: *Jim's rejected the offer*. Recognition that the presence of the tonic syllable in any other position, e.g., initial, as in: *Jim rejected the offer*, is very helpful for comprehension. In the second utterance, we know that *the offer* is "given" or "shared" information between speaker and hearer, and that *Jim* is being contrasted with someone else. A further value to being able to identify the tonic syllable is that this is the information focus, and therefore an awareness of the number of tonic syllables results in an awareness of the number of "information points" present in an utterance.

Paralinguistic signals

Paralinguistics and nonverbal communication have always interested linguists, but only since the advent of communicative language teaching, deriving from the work of Hymes (1971) on communicative competence, have they begun to take their rightful place in the foreign language classroom. Only recently have second language teachers begun to incorporate paralinguistics into their teaching. And only recently have applied linguists realized how second language learners tend to need every word to be comprehensible — that they do not extensively utilize paralinguistic signals. There is a great deal that may be gleaned from paralinguistics that is an aid to comprehension when listening.

For the purposes of this paper, I will use the term "paralinguistics" with the constraint imposed by Abercrombie (1968): that something may only be classified as a paralinguistic feature of language if it is consciously controlled by the user. The following are the paralinguistic signals which have been found to be most helpful to students.

(i) *Gesture* is very important. First, gesture can serve to *underscore* something verbal. Hand, or other body movements usually accompany *stressing*, and therefore are very useful for reasons described above. Second, gesture, e.g. a nod of assent, can carry the cognitive content independent of any spoken words. This means that the meaning may sometimes be comprehended by understanding the meaning of the gesture alone.

(ii) *Voice quality*, too, is a great aid to comprehension. A "whispery voice", for example, can help the listener to hypothesize that something secret or conspiratorial or frightening is being said.

(iii) Provided the words of caution above are heeded, *loudness and softness* of speech are very significant signals, too.

(iv) *Facial expression* can also be very useful in understanding what is being communicated.

Extralinguistic signals

Consciously or unconsciously, a listener in his mother tongue makes use of all

the extralinguistic or non-linguistic clues available, to help him comprehend what he is hearing. Certain sounds are identifiable with certain places, for example, and hearing those sounds sets up a certain hypothesis or expectation on the part of the listener, e.g., organ music suggests a church. This expectation is not always met, and then the hearer has to make a rapid adjustment. But very often it is met, and comprehension is greatly facilitated when these extralinguistic signals are exploited.

As in the case of paralinguistic features, second language learners seem by and large to ignore the extralinguistic features, and to devote their full attention to the words. Unfortunately, traditional ESL courses often present recorded material stripped of any background noise, which not only has the effect of removing an important aid from the students, but also indirectly reinforces the idea of "concentrate on the words only", which, in my opinion, is counter-productive.

Extralinguistic signals are of two main types — *visual* and *audible*. I will not expand on the visual signals in detail, since learning to make use of them presupposes the availability of video playback equipment, a projector, or the like. Suffice to say that there is a great deal to be gained from the visual signals — this is easily proved by playing a video or showing a film with the sound turned off, and seeing how much can be comprehended merely from the visual.

The audible extralinguistic signals are also very helpful aids, and this was proved in an informal experiment I carried out. I made a recording of eight 20 - 30 second segments recorded in Hebrew from radio broadcasts in Israel. This tape was played to a group of native-speakers of English in Canada who knew no Hebrew at all, and they were asked to say what was going on. Their success in doing this was remarkable! The people who took part did not know a single word of Hebrew, but were still able to determine quite well what was going on. Paralinguistic and extralinguistic clues were what they used. For example, they were able to identify commercials by their catchy jingle and "smooth" talk that followed — a format common on Canadian radio, too — to identify a basketball commentary by the crowd noise and speed of speech, and to identify a poetry reading by the deliberate speech, and, for some listeners, the rhyme.

GUESSING AND PREDICTING

When listening to a language we are proficient in, we can often understand, even if not every word is audible. We do this: (i) on the basis of what has preceded the section that is not clear; (ii) on the basis of the world knowledge that we bring to that particular topic; (iii) on the basis of the signals that we have been able to identify. These points will be developed below. However, first it is necessary to make some general statements about guessing and predicting as a part of listening comprehension.

We guess and predict all the time in our mother-tongue, but somehow we do not encourage our students to do so. As I have suggested, very often second language learners consciously or sub-consciously feel that everything has to be one hundred percent clear and comprehensible. They lack the confidence to predict or guess on the basis of partial knowledge. It is our duty as teachers to encourage students to

form hypotheses as to meaning, on the basis of partial knowledge—to encourage them to predict and to guess. They have to be convinced that predicting and guessing are vital for comprehension, and that it is perfectly natural to form a hypothesis that might have to be modified or refined later on. What is more, they have to be encouraged and supported until they are prepared to do this, without becoming disheartened or upset when they find that a particular hypothesis is completely wrong — it happens to all of us all the time. In order to succeed in getting students to guess and predict, a course in listening comprehension should contain specially prepared activities. And, coupled with this, the teacher must create a supportive atmosphere in which students' efforts are always applauded, and never mocked by teacher or peers.

Predicting by making use of what has already been said

What has gone before the part of an utterance that is not comprehensible is a very useful clue as to what was said in the part that was not clear. Certain expectations should have been set up. Speakers are speaking on a particular topic with its particular lexical field, and so we anticipate (predict) what is to come before it is ever said. (This is evidenced by the habit some native speakers have of saying the second half of what is being said to them in chorus with the speaker.) For example, when listening to a dialogue about a policeman questioning a suspect, it is likely that a student could guess the meaning of the word *grilling* in the sentence: *He gave him a real grilling*, and it is unlikely that he would associate it with cooking.

Exercises in sentence completion, in which the completion is an intelligent guess or a prediction, have proved to be excellent training in this skill. For example:

- (i) *On the one hand he was right, but on the other hand . . .* (students complete)
- (ii) *The dying king called for a priest to . . .* (students complete)
- (iii) *The man dropped his shopping bag and everything spilled out. He went up to a young girl watching and . . .* (students complete)

At a more advanced level, students can be asked to predict what will follow in a dialogue like:

- Bob: I can't bear cats. They affect my health.
Jane: Oh come on Bob. Don't be such a hypochondriac!
Bob: But my asthma may get worse.
Jane: You haven't had an asthma attack for seven years!
Bob: (does he agree to get a pet?)

Predicting by making use of world knowledge

Students should be trained to make use of all the world knowledge they have on the topic they are listening to. They are often nervous that they might guess *because* of their world knowledge, and therefore not actually listen. This certainly does happen, for example when someone who is well up on current affairs is listening to the news in a foreign language. But the benefit to be derived from

making use of this world knowledge is far greater than the danger of guessing instead of listening. Experimentation in the classroom has shown that students can cope with a much more difficult passage if they have sufficient world knowledge or background knowledge on which to base their hypotheses. Activities of various types should be given to them in which they are furnished with the background knowledge, and then hear the text which ends in the middle, and they are asked to predict what will follow. Of course they are drawing not only on their background or world knowledge, but also on what has gone before, and that is precisely what they should be doing.

Making use of signals

As has already been suggested, students must be trained to make use of *all* the different kinds of signals or clues available. From these signals they can do a great deal of intelligent guessing even if there are gaps in their comprehension. Effective activities can be developed to train students to make use of the different signals. One of the most successful for this purpose is having students listen from the middle of a conversation. They can also do exercises with recognizable syntactic patterns, like the example given above, and the teacher can discuss with them what they think the incomprehensible section can mean, and how they arrive at their hypotheses.

Students have found listening to several very short pieces of recorded tape in English (like the Hebrew tape referred to above, recorded from the radio) and being asked to say what they are listening to, very useful. The most useful aspect of such an exercise is not the guessing, but a discussion that should follow as to what the guess was based on, i.e., what signals were being used. I have also experimented with preceding this activity with the tape in Hebrew, and have found this to be very good training and encouragement in using signals and then making an intelligent guess.

When teaching students to identify interpersonal relations, directing their attention to *appellative terms* (*Your honour- Doctor, etc.*) has proved to be very valuable. The possibilities of developing activities for the purpose of learning to make use of signals are boundless. Students find such activities both enjoyable and very helpful.

SUGGESTED BASIC PRINCIPLES OF A COURSE IN LEARNING HOW TO LISTEN

In the following two sections, I will describe the design that I would advocate for a listening comprehension course for intermediate-to-advanced students. The course should be built on three basic principles: The first principle is that the students should do *a lot of listening*. The second basic principle is that after the point in question has been taught, the bulk of the listening will be to *real spoken data*. Wherever possible the data should be real communication that was neither written nor recorded with the second language learner in mind. By using real data, we will be exposing students to real language with all the background noise, hesitations, imperfections, etc.

The third basic principle is that when teaching listening comprehension, students have to be trained *how to listen* for different things. Mere exposure does *not*, in my opinion, constitute a course.

A SUGGESTED MODEL FOR A LISTENING COMPREHENSION COURSE

I would suggest a listening comprehension course in which a different strategy or aspect of listening is dealt with in each unit: *learning to guess; learning to interpret intonation; learning to determine topic, setting, interpersonal relations and mood, etc.* In keeping with the principle that the students have to be trained in these skills, the model I am advocating involves three stages:

(i) *Awareness or consciousness-raising.* This involves listening, analyzing and discussing how something means what it does. Students must be aware of the *identifying signals* that will help them to know what they're listening to.

(ii) *Specially constructed "training activities".* These are to give the students training in using the strategies they have been trained in. For example, they would be listening for titles or appellatives when trying to identify interpersonal relations e.g. *Darling, Nurse Jones, etc.*

(iii) *Less structured activities — unstructured real data.* In this third stage, the students move from specially constructed, and therefore, by definition, unnatural data, to real data. The first two stages are preparation for this final and most important stage. As I have suggested above, the bulk of the course should be devoted to the application of what the students have been trained to do when listening.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

In this paper I have attempted to show how important it is to teach listening comprehension, and I have made a number of suggestions as to how this should be done. It is my belief that putting students through a course of the type I am advocating will "unlock" the techniques and devices that students use when listening in their mother-tongue but do not exploit fully in the target language. In short, it will make a significant contribution to their ability to communicate in English.

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